

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 010698C]

International Whaling Commission; Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: NOAA makes use of a public Interagency Committee to assist in preparing for meetings of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). This notice sets forth guidelines for participating on the Committee and a tentative schedule of meetings and other important dates.

DATES: January 23, 1998, 2:00 p.m. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for additional information and tentative dates of additional interagency meetings in 1998.

ADDRESSES: The January 23, 1998 meeting will be held in Room 1863, Herbert C. Hoover Building, Department of Commerce, 14th and Constitution, Washington, DC. Copies of nominations for the U.S. Delegation to the May IWC meetings should be sent to Catherine Corson, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 13th floor, SSMC3, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Catherine Corson, telephone: (301) 713-2322.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The January 23, 1998 Interagency Committee meeting will review U.S. positions for the 1998 IWC Intersessional Meeting and review recent events relating to the IWC. The IWC will hold an intersessional meeting of Commissioners from February 3-5, 1998 in Antigua to discuss the "Proposal to Manage Whaling for the Future" introduced before the 49th annual IWC meeting by the Irish Government.

The Secretary of Commerce is charged with the responsibility of discharging the obligations of the United States under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946. This authority has been delegated to the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, who is also the U.S. Commissioner to the IWC. The U.S. Commissioner has primary responsibility for the preparation and negotiation of U.S. positions on international issues concerning whaling and for all matters involving the IWC.

He is staffed by the Department of Commerce and assisted by the Department of State, the Department of the Interior, the Marine Mammal Commission, and by other interested agencies.

Each year, NOAA conducts meetings and other activities to prepare for the annual meeting of the IWC. The major purpose of the preparatory meetings is to provide input in the development of policy by individuals and non-governmental organizations interested in whale conservation. NOAA believes that this participation is important for the effective development and implementation of U.S. policy concerning whaling. Any person with an identifiable interest in United States whale conservation policy may participate in the meetings, but NOAA reserves the authority to inquire about the interest of any person who appears at a meeting and to determine the appropriateness of that person's participation. Foreign nationals and persons who represent foreign governments may not attend. These stringent measures are necessary to promote the candid exchange of information and to establish the necessary basis for the relatively open process of preparing for IWC meetings that characterizes current practices.

Tentative Meeting Schedule

The tentative schedule of additional meetings and deadlines, including those of the IWC, during 1998 follows. Confirmation of Interagency Committee meeting times, dates and locations will be provided in future federal register notices.

March 1, 1998: Nominations for the U.S. Delegation to the May IWC meetings are due to the U.S. Commissioner, with a copy to Catherine Corson (SEE **ADDRESSES**). All persons wishing to be considered pursuant to the U.S. Commissioner's recommendation to the Department of State concerning the composition of the delegation should ensure that nominations are received by this date. Prospective Congressional advisors to the Delegation should contact the Department of State directly.

March 6, 1998: 2:00 p.m., Room 1863, Herbert C. Hoover Building, Department of Commerce, 14th and Constitution, Washington, DC: Tentative Interagency Committee meeting to review recent events relating to the IWC and to review U.S. positions for the 1998 IWC annual meeting.

April 23, 1998: 2:00 p.m., Room 1863, Herbert C. Hoover Building, Department of Commerce, 14th and Constitution, Washington, DC: Tentative Interagency

Committee meeting to review recent events relating to the IWC and to review U.S. positions for the 1998 IWC annual meeting.

April 27 to May 9, 1998 (Oman): IWC Scientific Committee Meeting.

May 11 to 20, 1998 (Oman): IWC 50th Annual Meeting.

Special Accommodations

Department of Commerce meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Joanna Davis at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Dated: January 8, 1998.

Patricia Montanio,

Deputy Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 010798A]

Magnuson Act Provisions; Effects of Fishing on Essential Fish Habitat; Public Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Public meetings.

SUMMARY: NMFS will hold public meetings to brief the Fishery Management Councils (Councils) and interested parties on the results of a synthesis of available scientific information on fishing gear impacts on habitat entitled: The Indirect Effects of Fishing by Peter J. Auster and Richard W. Langton. Following a presentation there will be an opportunity for questions and comments. NMFS requests that comments be limited to those concerning the adequacy of the synthesis, i.e., what scientific studies are missing, and any disagreements with the scientific conclusions.

DATES: The meetings are scheduled to be held from January 20 to February 5, 1998. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific dates, locations, and times.

ADDRESSES: Requests for special accommodations should be addressed to Office of Habitat Conservation, Attention: Gear Impacts, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282; telephone: 301/713-2325.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Thomas, NMFS, 301/713-2325.